

COMMUNITY DRUG ALERT

September 3, 2024

Increase is suspected drug poisonings

- From August 28th to September 2nd there was an increased number of reported overdoses/drug poisonings with 43 reported cases and 2 suspected drug-related deaths.
- The unregulated drug supply is unpredictable, drug overdoses/poisonings may require more naloxone and unexpected reactions may occur.
- The Kitchener CTS Drug Checking Program has detected nitazenes in fentanyl samples. Colours of concern are dark green/dark blue. Nitazenes are strong synthetic opioids which may require more doses of naloxone.
- Flubromazolam AKA “Liquid Xanax,” bromazolam, and paraflurofentanyl have also been detected in single samples over the last week. While a connection between the substances identified and the suspected drug overdose/poisoning related deaths is not known, the details on these substances are included for your information.

IF SOMEONE OVERDOSES:

1. Call 911.
2. Administer naloxone if an opioid drug poisoning is suspected.
3. Perform rescue breathing and/or chest compressions.
4. Do not give any other substance(s) because this can make the drug poisoning worse.
5. If no improvements, continue to give naloxone 2-3 minutes apart until paramedics arrive.
6. If you have to leave the person unattended, put them in the recovery position.

IF USING SUBSTANCES:

- Never use substances alone. If using with a friend, do not use at the exact same time or use the National Overdose Response Service (NORS) at 1-888-688-6677.
- Try a small amount first and use less drugs when your tolerance may be lower.
- Avoid mixing substances – do not use other downers (e.g. benzos, alcohol, and other opioids).
- Have naloxone ready and know how to use it.
- Use at the Consumption & Treatment Services (CTS) site at 150 Duke Street West (Open 7 days a week, 9am-9pm, 8:30pm last call). Drug checking services are also available at the CTS site. Visit <https://sanguen.com/drug-checking-program/>
- Anyone who is involved in a drug poisoning including the person needing help and anyone at the scene is protected from simple possession charges if you call 911 by the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act.

RESOURCES

Get a Naloxone Kit	Get Alerts	Get Support
<p>Naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies are free and available for pickup across Waterloo Region.</p> <p>For pickup at public health or a community partner location, visit regionofwaterloo.ca/harmreduction or call 519-575-4400.</p> <p>For other locations in Waterloo Region and across Ontario, visit Ontario.ca/naloxone.</p>	<p>Follow us on Twitter for community drug alert updates: @DrugStrategyWR.</p> <p>To sign up to receive alerts, visit https://subscription.waterlooregiondrugstrategy.ca/Subscribe or scan the QR code with a mobile device.</p> 	<p>Call Here 24/7 for addiction, mental health, and crisis services anytime for support.</p> <p>1-844-437-3247 1-844-HERE247 here247.ca.</p>

Detected Substances from the Drug Checking Program – Key Information

Fentanyl

- A highly potent opioid, considered up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Fentanyl is the opioid of choice for many people who use opioids. Since the unregulated drug supply is unpredictable, a person may want to use fentanyl but it could be laced with something else or could be stronger.
- Naloxone can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose/ drug poisoning.

Fentanyl Analogues

- The continued presence of new high-potency opioids increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and **may require more naloxone than expected** to rouse individuals.

Nitazenes

- A highly potent synthetic opioid.
- More naloxone than normal may be needed to help someone who has had a drug overdose/poisoning with Nitazenes.
- The effects of Nitazenes can result in sedation. This means that the person may not wake up for a long time. If possible, stay with the person until they wake up or help arrives.
- The presence of other drugs (opioids, benzos) in combination with Nitazenes increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and death.
- Fentanyl drug testing strips cannot detect Nitazines.

Flubromazolam, AKA “Liquid Xanax”

- A highly potent benzodiazepine (benzo).
- The effects of Flubromazolam can result in sedation. This means that the person may not wake up for an extended amount of time. If possible, stay with the person until they wake up or help arrives.
- Flubromazolam can result in memory loss. Sedation and memory loss may last more than 24 hours.
- The effects of Flubromazolam can have multiple "peaks". The effects may feel like they start to weaken but then can "peak" and feel stronger again later.
- Because Flubromazolam lasts in the body for a long time, using multiple times can cause it to build up in the body, increasing the risk of experiencing a drug poisoning.
- Harmful effects of Flubromazolam include:
 - Severe and prolonged sedation
 - Slow breathing
 - Low blood pressure
 - Memory loss
 - Difficulty in following and responding in a conversation, loss of muscle control in arms and legs, sleep paralysis, visual disturbances, heart palpitations (feeling like your heart is beating fast or fluttering)

Bromazolam

- A highly potent, benzodiazepine-related drug.
- The presence of opioids in combination with benzodiazepine-related drugs increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and death. Naloxone should still be used to reverse the effects of opioids, but naloxone cannot reverse the effects of benzodiazepines.
- In the event of an opioid and benzodiazepine-related overdose/drug poisoning, the effects of the benzodiazepine may maintain sedation for a longer period of time. This means that the person

may not wake up for an extended amount of time. If possible, stay with the person until they wake up or help arrives.

- Benzodiazepine effects can include the following:
 - Blackouts, memory loss, drowsiness and sedation: the person may feel very sleepy and slip in and out of consciousness.
 - Slurred speech, impaired balance, grogginess and/or movement control.
 - Slow breathing.

Drug checking is available at the Kitchener CTS site, for more information please visit: <https://sanguen.com/drug-checking-program/>.

Media Request Inquiries:

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